

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 10, 2017

Agenda Item: 2017 Migratory Bird (Waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, Mourning Doves and Snipe)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed for this Presentation: 30 Min

Background

Migratory bird hunting regulations pertain to cranes, snipe, doves, ducks, geese, swans, and coots. Montana participates in both the Central and Pacific Flyways and adheres to the federal frameworks established by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the flyway councils. The federal frameworks that include season dates and bag limits are proposed by the USFWS at the federal level in December and finalized in March. States may be more conservative than these frameworks but may not exceed them.

For the 2017-18 migratory bird regulations, FWP proposes:

- Expanding sandhill crane hunting opportunities in the Rocky Mountain Population by adding 7 days to sandhill crane seasons to equal the federal framework maximum of 30 days.
- Reduce the daily pintail bag limit would from 2 to 1 in both flyways in accordance with the federal framework.
- Reduce the closed period in the Central Flyway Zone 2 split duck, coot, and goose seasons from 12 days (Oct. 9-20) to 5 days (Oct. 16-20). Central Flyway Zone 2 ducks would end Jan. 9, and geese would end Jan. 17.
- Increase the “bonus teal” opportunity, which allows 2 additional blue-winged teal in the daily bag, in the Central Flyway duck season from the first 9 days to the first 16 days.

All other elements of the 2017-18 season are proposed to remain unchanged except for calendar rotation.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Migratory bird season comments were received throughout the year. They included several comments from individuals who did not like the 12-day duck and goose closure in the Central Flyway Zone 2 in October primarily due to the lost opportunities when ducks and geese are present and all wetlands are unfrozen and available.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions, or no change.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Rationale for individual proposals may be further articulated at the Feb. 10 Commission meeting. FWP recommends that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2017-18 migratory bird season as proposed.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission adopt for public comment, the 2017-18 Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations as presented by FWP, and all other portions of the previous 2016-17 migratory bird season regulations not affected by Commission action today.